

Memorial Addresses

ON THE
LIFE AND CHARACTER
OF
GOVERNOR
JOHN RANKIN ROGERS
Sept. 4, 1838 --- Dec. 26, 1901



MEMORIAL ADDRESSES

ON THE

LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF

GOV. JOHN RANKIN ROGERS

DELIVERED IN THE

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JOHN RANKIN ROGERS.

John Rankin Rogers was a native of the State of Maine. He was born in the town of Brunswick, in that State, on September 4, 1838. In 1855 he removed to Jackson, Miss., entered the drug business there and remained until 1860. In 1876 he moved to Wichita, Kan., and became editor of the *Kansas Commoner*. During this period he became very much interested in the Farmers' Alliance, finally becoming an organizer. From Kansas Governor Rogers removed to the State of Washington in 1890, locating in Puyallup, where he and his family have since resided.

It was in the State of Washington that Governor Rogers first became an important factor in politics. He allied himself with the Populists of the State and was elected to the Legislature early in his career here. With the nomination of William J. Bryan in 1896, and the consequent fusion of the Populist and Democratic parties, Governor Rogers was recognized as a leader among them in this State, and his nomination for Governor on the fusion ticket followed. Immediately after his nomination Governor Rogers conducted a campaign throughout the State. But a comparatively few people in the State knew him prior to his nomination. He had been in the State but six years, and although a member of the Legislature and a leading Populist, had traveled little about the State for political purposes. During this tour in 1896 Governor Rogers made the friends who twice made him Governor. He was elected by 12,000 majority in 1896, and in 1900 was again nominated for the office. Despite the fact that this year was marked by a Republican land-

slide, all of the officers elected on the State ticket, with the exception of the Governor, being Republicans, and the Legislature being overwhelmingly Republican, Governor Rogers was again returned.

The character of the man was remarkable in many respects. Both of his administrations were marked with extreme solicitude on the part of the Governor for the public welfare. At the beginning of his first administration there was a disruption of his party threatened because he refused to be guided by the dictates of party managers in making his appointments, but insisted on looking first for competent and trustworthy men, nor was he slow to remove incompetent appointees as soon as their incompetence was made manifest to him.

In one notable instance a party leader of prominence was urged by the managers for appointment to a prominent position in one of the State institutions. But the applicant was accused of appearing in public slightly under the influence of intoxicants and in spite of the urgent requests of many persons prominent in the fight for his election and the threats of others, the Governor was obdurate in his refusal.

As members of the first board of control for the government of the State penal and reformatory institutions, organized by the Governor under a law passed by the Legislature of 1897, the Governor appointed several of the elected State officials. But shortly afterward the organization of the board the organization evinced indications of an intention to make appointment under it a reward for party service instead of employing men for efficiency and ability in the particular positions to be filled. As soon as the Governor became convinced of these indications he removed the mem-

bers of the board and appointed an entirely new board. This raised a political storm throughout the State, but the people soon came to realize the purport of the chief executive's action and to ardently approve the principle which inspired it.

Governor Rogers has always been an ardent friend of education. As the author of the "Rogers' barefoot school-boy bill" he brought about a reform in the appropriation and expenditure of school moneys which has placed the public schools of this State on an equal or higher plane than those of any State in the West. Early in his administration he freed the State higher educational institutions from the grasp of political control and manipulation. But even his pronounced friendship for education was not allowed to carry him into extravagance in the support of educational institutions unwarranted by the finances of the State. This was shown in his veto of the appropriation for the support of the State Normal School at Cheney during the period when taxation for State purposes was burdensome and the demand for retrenchment was loud and strong.

In the organization of the troops called from this State by the Federal Government at the outbreak of the Spanish-American war, there was a pressing demand for the appointment to command the regiment of one of the officers of the national guard or of some person politically prominent in the State. Governor Rogers showed his wisdom and foresight again here, by appointing an officer of the regular army to whip the recruits into shape for service and afterwards led them into battle. The uncontrovertible logic of events has since proved the wisdom of his course.

As an author, Governor Rogers has won no little distinction. He is the author of several works on political and economic subjects, which have brought him much notice from thinking men. Of these "The Irrepressible Conflict," "Looking Forward" and "The Inalienable Rights of Man" are probably the best known and widest read. In addition to these he is the author of two books which are of the nature of problem novels, and a book of clear and forcible essays published under the general title of "Life."

Passage of the Barefoot Schoolboy Law was one of John Rogers' accomplishments while serving in the legislature, before being elected Governor.